

## EVELYNE VILLINES AWARD

This award is presented each year to an individual with a disability who exhibits exceptional character and outstanding achievement and has successfully graduated to other employment following work in the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. This award is named for Evelyne Villines, a leading national spokesperson and advocate for people with disabilities, as well as a champion of the JWOD Program.



**Edward Lewis**

The Arc of Caddo-Bossier  
Shreveport, Louisiana

Grit, determination and exceptional character have propelled Edward Lewis from the lowest depths of despair and anger to outstanding professional achievement. He is an extraordinary example of someone who utilized employment through the JWOD Program as a springboard to remarkable professional success and advocacy for people with disabilities.

Edward shares that five years of unemployment due to a rare, debilitating physical condition that ultimately resulted in the replacement of both his hips left him bitter, hopeless and an alcoholic. He vainly attempted to use alcohol to drown the pain he felt because he no longer was the proud wage earner he had been.

Then Edward accepted a custodial position at The Arc of Caddo-Bossier working on a JWOD Program contract with Barksdale Air Force Base and, from that moment on, he rapidly turned his life around. Once employed, Edward swiftly earned respect and responsibility. Excellent work ethics and job performance quickly resulted in his promotion to shift supervisor. His demonstrative dedication to that job combined with an exemplary work attitude led to his second promotion to site supervisor and, soon after that, to assistant manager for Barksdale Air Force Base Custodial.

"We are so thrilled about Edward's award," said Janet Parker, Executive Director of The Arc of Caddo-Bossier. "He is the kindest, sweetest and most courageous man. A GREAT example of the way a good job can help a person recover control over their own life as well as dignity, pride and a positive attitude. Edward is so positive!"

Today, Edward is the Program Manager for The Arc of Caddo-Bossier's Barksdale Air Force Base custodial contract. It's an advanced position that requires a mix of well-developed professional skills. In addition to managing the complex details of cleaning 132 buildings on the base, Edward must successfully interface with high ranking members of the Armed Forces, frontline custodial employees, the families of people with disabilities, and middle and upper management at The Arc of Caddo-Bossier. He does it all with amazing ease.

Edward's most remarkable attribute may be his determination to give back and help others with severe disabilities. After rising to a leadership position, Edward has been committed to helping people with disabilities gain confidence and experience the satisfaction and benefits of hard work. He encourages his co-workers to become self-advocates and to achieve their full potential. Edward also participated in NISH's Grassroots Advocacy Conference in 2004.

Edward goes above and beyond expectations to assist his custodial teams in meeting the needs of Barksdale Air Force Base. Very often, Edward can be spotted cheerfully lending a hand by providing transportation to an employee who needs a ride to work at the last minute. Out of concern that his employees have good social outlets, Edward frequently hosts barbecues and other enjoyable activities outside the job. His sincere and total concern for all his employees has created a very positive work environment and enhanced the dedication of his cleaning teams to their jobs.

NISH proudly presents Edward with the National Evelyne Villines Award and congratulates him for the stellar example he sets as an individual with a disability who has triumphed over all obstacles to professional achievement through hard work, exceptional character and strong advocacy for the JWOD Program.

### Evelyne Villines Award for Excellence in the Workplace

As a person with a disability, Evelyne Villines is a leading national spokesperson and advocate for people with disabilities. Villines served for 20 years on the NISH Board of Directors and was on the board when only a handful of nonprofit agencies (NPAs) participated in the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. By 1994, the year that Villines departed from the NISH Board, more than 22,000 people with severe disabilities were employed on JWOD Program projects, earning more than \$1 million in direct labor wages. In 1994, Villines was appointed to serve on the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. She was an active participant on the Committee until her term expired in 2003.

It is in recognition of Evelyne Villines' commitment and dedication to the JWOD Program and people with severe disabilities that NISH instituted the Evelyne Villines Award for Excellence in the Workplace.

## EVELYNE VILLINES EAST REGIONAL AWARD

### Robert Gagnon

The John E. Fogarty Center  
North Providence, Rhode Island

Robert Gagnon exceeds everyone's expectations.

When he began working at The Fogarty Center in July 2003 as a piece worker, Rob quickly made friends and got to know the staff. It wasn't long before he expressed an interest in obtaining a job outside of the nonprofit agency and was hired to carry out custodial services at a JWOD Program contract at the Lincoln Army Reserve Center. In just under a year, Rob outgrew that job too and subsequently obtained the job of dishwasher at a local Pizza Hut—just two years after he had walked through the doors of The Fogarty Center!



"As Executive Director of The John E. Fogarty Center, I take great pride in Rob Gagnon receiving this award," Ted Polak said. "Rob has been involved with The Fogarty Center for two and a half years and, in a short time, has contributed to the community in many ways. He has shown great strides in his own progress in the world of work and is most deserving of the Evelyn Villines Award."

Typically, when individuals are introduced to the JWOD Program, they require some time to adjust to the changes in their schedules and responsibilities. While it takes some individuals longer than others to make the change, Rob never appeared to experience an adjustment phase at all! He immediately adapted to his new work life and required minimal training from a job coach. He learned his assignments quickly, was always eager to help others and was highly motivated to learn new skills so he could keep himself busy at work.

At his current job with Pizza Hut, Rob deftly keeps the dish line flowing efficiently and, in less than one month, his manager recognized the potential of his new hire. Already, the Pizza Hut manager has said he believes Rob will move up within the organization.

"We are proud of Rob," said Justin Gagnon, Manager at Pizza Hut (no relation to Rob). "He comes to work with a positive attitude and has excellent attendance. I feel he deserves this award."

"Rob does everything asked of him. I wish we had more workers like Rob," said Charles Gavin, Assistant Manager at Pizza Hut.

Rob also is involved with his local community. He participates in the self-advocacy program, "Advocates in Action" and volunteers as a cue card person and timer for the local cable television program, "Able To." Looking to the future, Rob is working toward moving out of his family home and into his own apartment.

NISH applauds Rob for his work ethic and professional ambitions, and for never turning away from new challenges or learning experiences. We congratulate Rob as a highly deserving winner of this year's Villines East Regional Award.

**EVELYNE VILLINES NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL AWARD**

**Floyd Harvey**  
Goodwill Solutions  
Des Moines, Iowa

Floyd Harvey sincerely cares about each and every person on his custodial services crew at the Federal Building in Des Moines, Iowa—a JWOD Program contract managed by Goodwill Solutions. That heartfelt concern reflects the core of Floyd's strong leadership style. He has excelled in custodial services through consistent hard work and a commitment to mastering every aspect of the job. His frontline experience and down-to-earth manner has fostered the trust and respect of all his colleagues. He readily identifies with the work challenges his co-workers struggle to overcome and utilizes this insight to encourage and empower them to fulfill their full potential.

"The crew feels they can trust him because they see him as one of their own, as someone who has gone through many of the same challenges they face and understands the meaning of hard work from the ground up," said Sally Loyd, Project Manager for NISH sites at Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa. "They know they can go to him if they have problems because he sincerely understands their issues."

Floyd started working for Goodwill Solutions at the Federal Building in Des Moines in 2000. From the very start and through to this day, if something needs to be done, Floyd never hesitates to roll up his sleeves and complete the task. He's not afraid to ask questions if he is unsure how to approach a situation so he can ensure he does the best possible job. Also, he has purposefully educated himself about all of the cleaning products and processes involved with custodial services at the Federal Building.

"Floyd has distinguished himself on the job through 'proactive learning,'" Loyd said. "When products and techniques are introduced, he is the first to establish new procedures by learning them thoroughly and then instructing his colleagues."

Floyd has a superlative work ethic and recently was given the added responsibility of taking over his supervisor's duties when the supervisor is absent. Needless to say, he has managed that new role exceedingly well. "For example, Floyd believes that just telling an employee what to do is not good enough," Loyd said. "He always takes time to personally show an individual how to complete the task correctly."

Finally, Floyd is hugely popular because of his big smile, very polite manner and terrific sense of humor—all of which fosters a very positive work environment.

From completing routine janitorial duties to managing an entire staff, Floyd has excelled in his job and reflects all of the most positive attributes of a JWOD employee, rapidly graduating toward greater responsibilities. NISH congratulates Floyd for his commitment to providing quality services, skill and compassion.

**EVELYNE VILLINES PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL AWARD**

**Vicki Peterson**  
PRIDE Industries  
Roseville, California

When Vicki Peterson first started working at PRIDE Industries, one manager feared she might not last the day. She faced significant challenges communicating with her peers and supervisors. Fast forward 13 years later and today, Vicki is a supervisor who has cross-trained in nearly every position PRIDE Industries offers through its JWOD Program contract at the Beale Air Force Base Commissary.

"Her desire to grow and her ability to make it happen is a formula not found in too many individuals," said PRIDE District General Manager Mary Flores. "Vicki, however, is the exception. Vicki is just being Vicki, a humble, no nonsense human being with a whole lot of motivation. I'm proud of her accomplishments and delighted she is getting the recognition she deserves."

Vicki started working at PRIDE Industries less than a year after she graduated from high school, relieved to learn there was a company in her community that would not only understand her disability, but also offer her a chance to build a satisfying career. She started working as a shelf stocker and developed the skills she needed to advance. She progressed to stocker, lead stocker and then material handler. Finally, after successfully serving as interim project manager for four months, she moved up to her current position as custodial supervisor.

Few employees can match Vicki's dedication and everyday effort, whether it is working on contractual obligations, employee payroll, safety, purchasing or scheduling. Hard work and drive enabled Vicki to overcome her challenges in communicating and that experience has enhanced her understanding of the difficulties faced by new employees.

Also, it has helped her to establish strong relationships with her staff.

Among Vicki's best characteristics are her insights as both a teacher and a student. Outside of PRIDE Industries, Vicki has continued her education at a local community college where she has developed the skills necessary to assist in her professional growth. Her promotions proved both to her and those around her that through dedication and hard work, one can advance within the organization.

"During her 13-year PRIDE career, Vicki has consistently worked to improve her skills in order to best serve our Air Force customer," said PRIDE President and CEO Michael Ziegler. "Vicki's hard work and dedication set a shining example for all of us! Vicki is awesome!"

NISH applauds Vicki for serving as an inspiring role model to her fellow employees and others with disabilities as they attempt to enter the work force.

## **EVELYNE VILLINES NORTHWEST REGIONAL AWARD**

### **James Thompson**

Northwest Center Industries  
Seattle, Washington

As a JWOD Program employee, James Thompson always strived to learn and move ahead in his job performing janitorial services for Northwest Center Industries in Seattle, WA. Throughout the 14 years that James worked for Northwest Center Industries, his supervisors reported he enthusiastically embraced opportunities to acquire new skills and expand his responsibilities. They recounted how much James enjoyed learning to strip and wax floors for the first time and later, operate high-speed burnishers, extractors and press washers.

James' keen interest and passion for his work made him a highly reliable and skilled performer who took pride in maintaining the General Services Administration (GSA) Nakamura Courthouse building. He befriended tenants and was considered a beloved member of the Courthouse "family." He was the ultimate team player who collaborated closely with his colleagues to complete the daily tasks, and he led by example, ultimately earning the position of Lead Custodian responsible for crew movement and task completion on a daily basis.

James was truly invaluable to Northwest Center Industries because of his comprehensive knowledge of the Nakamura Courthouse building and his excellent relationship with the tenants. After hours, James socialized with his fellow employees and participated in local community sports activities, but before the end of each workday, James made sure the Courthouse was sparkling!

In 2005, James accepted a custodial position outside of the JWOD Program at the Bellevue Washington School District where he is, by all accounts, doing an outstanding job. NISH and Northwest Center Industries congratulates James for all his achievements and his recent progression into a new job within the local community. We salute him as a distinguished example of all that the Evelyn Villines Award represents and lauds.